

HONOLULU STAR BULLETIN
13 MAY 1981

CIA Critic Fights Shield Covert Agents

By Lee Gomes

Star-Bulletin Writer

A T armeeing of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee last year to vote on a bill involving disclosure of information about the CIA, a member of the panel turned to its then-chairman, Sen. Edward Kennedy, and said, "Will this get Agee?"

"Yeah," Kennedy replied.

The account of the meeting described above was published in the Village Voice and the Agee in question is Philip Agee, who was a dedicated CIA agent in Latin America for nearly a decade, but who left the agency in 1968. Seven years later, he wrote about his experiences in a book called "Inside the Company," causing an enormous amount of consternation with his former employers.

The book appeared at a time of extensive publicity about CIA abuses, both foreign and domestic, but went further than any other critic of "The Company" had gone—it named names of CIA agents operating in foreign countries.

Agee admitted to writing his book partly out of a sense of guilt, describing memories of sitting in a South American police station, "hearing the moaning and screams of a torture victim and knowing that it was I who a few days earlier had given that man's name to the police."

AGEE'S detailed exposure of CIA activities, including identifying CIA agents by name, is being carried on by a small Washington-based magazine, the "Covert Action Information Bulletin."

Agee is still a kind of godfather to the magazine, but its day-to-day work is carried on by four persons, including Louis Wolf, who worked in the '60s as a Quaker volunteer in Laos and who has spent much of his time since then fighting the CIA.

Wolf is in Hawaii to talk about U.S. support for the military regime in El Salvador, a lecture to be delivered at 8 p.m. Friday at the meeting house of the American Friends Service Committee in Manoa.

He also is here to speak against the "get-Agee" bill, which is working its way through Congress and which if passed, Wolf said, would put his magazine and most critical writing about American intelligence work out of business.

In an interview yesterday, Wolf said that he and his co-workers are opposed to the work of the CIA in the first place because its main business has little to do with straightforward intelligence work.

"If all the CIA was doing was collecting information and passing it on to the executive branch so it could make better foreign policy decisions, then we would have no problem with that."

"But there's ample evidence that the main basis for CIA activities in the world—and not just in countries that are unfriendly to the United States—is one of covert intervention and manipulation of internal events."

"The overriding concern of the agency has always been covert action—secret intervention—generally in support of the interests of a small group of people, whether they be in government or in certain corporations," he said.

AMONG the tools of the CIA's covert action, Wolf claimed, are bribery, rigged elections, "destabilizing" national economies, kidnapping, torture and murder.

The magazine that is Wolf's main weapon against the agency is published half a dozen times a year, and deals with a wide range of intelligence activities. For example, it gave continuing coverage to the attempts to bring about the downfall of Jamaica's socialist government, and the current issue includes a profile of William Casey, the new CIA director, and an article about the involvement of former intelligence officers in last year's American election.

But the section of the magazine that has received the most publicity is usually only a few pages long, and is called, appropriately, "Naming Names."

It lists, country by country, CIA operatives turned up through the staff's research, most of which is

from public records, such as the State Department's official biographies. Telltale signs of CIA ties used by the staff include lengthy, unexplained leaves of absence or ambiguous titles given for stints with other government agencies or with private companies.

That section has been called reckless, treasonous and life-threatening to men and women serving their country, but the criticisms have not affected the magazine's staff.

Wolf said that CIA agents know they are involved in dangerous work when they take it, and said, "We've published more than 2,000 names, and not a single one has been scratched, or murdered."

The CIA disputes that, saying there is a link between the 1975 slaying of Richard Welch, the CIA station chief in Athens, and the fact that Welch's CIA ties were disclosed the year before in another magazine similar to Wolf's.

DEFENDERS of the idea of naming names counter that Welch's killing came at a time of heated anti-American sentiment in Greece, and that upon being transferred to Athens, Welch acted against the CIA's own advice by moving into a house that had long been known as the residence of the current top man for the CIA.

"We oppose, unalterably, the CIA, but we also oppose assassination as a means of fighting the CIA," Wolf said. "All it does is give them the status of martyrdom, which they don't deserve. If one agent dies, they'll replace him with two or three more."

"Our objective is to make it more difficult for them to work," he said.

The policy of naming names is not consistent, though. When the American Embassy in Tehran was seized in 1979, the magazine was besieged with calls from reporters wanting to know who among the captive embassy employees were CIA agents. It declined to name them.

One reason for that decision, Wolf said, was the immediate danger such publicity could have posed to the agents, even though their identities already were known to the Iranians, largely through captured embassy documents.

The other reason was that the disclosures "would have diverted attention from the real question—that the CIA's work in Iran, much more so